

"A Wreath of Rue,"

FOR LENT;

AND

THE SACRED LAKE.

By A. MOUNTAIN,

AUTHOR OF

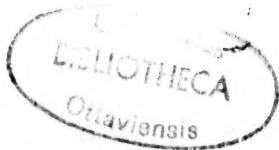
"ST. HELIER," "OLD SARUM," "STONEHENGE," AND OTHER POEMS.



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"A WREATH OF RUE,"

FOR LENT.

For Ash Wednesday.

NINEVEH.

THE REPENTANCE OF FEAR.

An ancient city* once, with all its towers,
Its domes, its turrets, bath'd in golden hours,
Lay basking on the plain :
From balcony and window went a voice
Of music sweet, and cry—"Rejoice, rejoice, "
And dance and feast, and feast and dance again."

In luxury and pomp, and love and flowers,
In garlands, garments gay, and perfum'd showers,
Each day and night did wane ;
And still, with wine and song, and dulcet noise,
Did sackbut, harp and lute exhort—"Rejoice,
And feast and dance, and dance and feast again."

* Jonah, chap. iii.

But, hark ! a voice above the revels ringing,
Like bells at midnight by an earthquake swinging—

 "Destruction comes ! repent !

Yet forty days, this place shall be o'erthrown,
Fire and whirlwind rend it stone from stone ;
 Madmen, repent—repent !"

And thro' the festive streets a being spectral,
Like one by fiends pursu'd, with voice sepulchral,

 Who ran and cried—"Repent !

From Hell's red depths, beneath the ocean's gloom,
Where death's black weeds enwrap'd me for my doom,*
 Back to the world I'm sent,

To summon you, when forty days expire,
To shoreless seas of brimstone and of fire ;

 Repent !—repent !—repent !"

With haggard face, and eyes dilated, staring,
Gigantic form, and wan, with wild locks glaring—
He paus'd not, turn'd not, like a meteor flying,
Till in the distance, as the spent storm dying,
 Was heard—"Repent ! repent !"

Then ceas'd the music, harp, and dulcimer ;
And dancing feet no longer gleaming were !

 All lips turn'd pale ;

Goblets o'erthrown ; silent the riot rout ;
The idol's song, the wine-inspired shout,
 Chang'd to one wail :

* "The weeds were wrapped about my head."—Jonah, ii. 5.

Till rose the King, with love kiss'd garland crown'd,
Snapp'd ev'ry jewel'd knot, and cast it on the ground :

 "One hope—to prayer, to prayer !
The God of Heaven may yet withstay his hand,
If humble, fasting, weeping, all the land
 Cry mightily to spare."

* * * * *

Yes! God beheld repentant man with pity ;
A day of grace He gave that humbl'd city,—
 A mis-spent day of grace.

Ah, Nineveh ! amid thy ruins lone,
Sits desolation on thy threshold stone,
 And stares into thy face.

Amid thy cedar courts are wild beasts lying,
And on thy broken walls the dry grass sighing
 To days gone by :
While in thy lintels, whence sweet lutes did swell,
Now cormorants lodge and shriek, and bitterns dwell,
 With their discordant cry.

* * * * *

Oh, let us read the past with introspection,
As illustrating the divine reflection
 In warning given—
That they who slight the Prophets and the law,
Would not repent although the dead they saw
 Beckon to Heaven.

And in these forty days "bemoaning wholly,
With all contrition, and with meekness" lowly,
Our sinfulness of yore :
So shall be thus "the day of vengeance wrathful,
And solemn voice of most just judgment" awful,
Averted from our shore.



For the First Week in Lent.

—
ESAU.

THE REPENTANCE OF REGRET.

—●—

"Hast thou but one blessing, my Father? And he lifted up his voice and wept,"—Gen. xvii. 38.

"He found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears,"—Heb. xii. 17.

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,"—St. Luke, xv. 10.

—●—

The eastern moon rose broad and red
Against the western sun ;
The fring'd palm higher rais'd its head ;
The day's fierce reign was done :

The Patriarch's tents, in eve's last light,
Their long dark shadows threw ;
While dim, and far, and lost in night,
The sands drank in the dew.

A vaguely solemn, silent scene
Round Sheba's valley slept,
When, from the tent's dim folds between,
A voice of one who wept.

"A Wreath of Rue," for Lent.

The cry throughout the valley pass'd—
Contrition and despair—
"One blessing, Father, all thou hast !
Bless me, e'en me, thine heir."

The palm trees wav'd, the moon rose high,
The misty desert spread :
How could be check'd, by mortal's cry,
Nature's majestic tread ?

The night absorb'd the transient sound ;
No rock gave back a sigh :
All unresponsive was around,
To frail man's agony.

Oh, Nature ! cruel to thy child ;
How many a bitter pain,
Since that lone cry upon the wild,
Hath sought thy breast in vain ?

One blessing only, Mother Earth !
Can no hot tears efface ?
Is all remorse but nothing worth
Past errors to retrace ?

No ! Nature's laws cannot reverse,
For man's inconstant mind ;
And one must reap the whirlwind's curse,
If he have sown the wind.

"A Wreath of Rue," for Lent.

9

One blessing, and forever gone !
Oh, dreary coming years ! !
Inexorable world, roll on,
Thou can'st not stay for tears !

But far beyond earth's utmost zone,
The King of Kings, Most High,
And all the angels round his throne,
Catch each remorseful sigh.

There the repentant need not stand,
In sorrow, all in vain,
That, in his Heavenly Father's hand,
No blessings still remain.

For there "are many mansions" fair,
And joys beyond our thought,
Such as ne'er fill'd the raptur'd ear,
Nor tranced eye hath caught.

Then "lift the drooping hands" once more,
And "bend the feeble knees"
To Him, who only can restore,
And ev'ry grief appease.



For the Second Week in Lent.

SAUL.

THE REPENTANCE OF POLICY.

"Then he said, I have sinned : yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel."—1 Sam. xv. 30.

When from the broad full blaze of dazzling noon,
Where floods of sunshine fill the glowing air,
Descending into subterraneous gloom,
By some dark crypt's abrupt and devious stair,
Chill'd is the heart, bewilder'd is the brain,
Confused with sudden night and anxious doubt ;
Unable through the maze to find again
The way of entrance, or the passage out :
Phantoms look forth from ev'ry lurking place ;
Reason grows weak :—death stares us in the face.

Thus royal Sàul forsook the light divine
That beam'd so brightly on his youthful days,
And plung'd into the dim and tortuous mine
Of worldly policy's bewild'ring ways.
His soul, once bright with inspiration's fire,
Now has not even pure repentance torch ;

Presumption, envy, and an insane ire
Still urge him in the labyrinthine search,
Where madness whispers, superstitions glide,
Till wholly lost—despair and suicide—

Is this the youth who stood in Zuph's high gates
With lofty form, and with ingenuous breast,
Unconscious that the Seer to greet him waits,
And eager only on his Father's quest ?
Is this the man whose soul heroic woke,
(Touch'd by the mystic oil and words of power)
Who flinging off Philistia's cruel yoke,
With one high effort seized on triumph's hour ;
While mystic portents all his courage fired,
And thoughts prophetic his whole soul inspired ?

Ah, luckless Saul ! how bright thy rising day,
That set in trouble, frenzy, and despair !
When self-reliance led thy heart astray,
Black melancholy loaded thee with care ;
An evil spirit vex'd thee, day and night,
Scarce kept at bay by music's holy spell ;
Not all the songs of Judah's sacred might
Its fiendish promptings wholly could dispel ;
Not Israel's sweetest singer's gentlest strain,
Could charm thy spirit long to peace again.

A desperate, godless, God-forsaken one—
Yet bent the future's very worst to know :
In gloomy cave, with incantations done,
He stood awaiting what the dead would show.—

With self-emitting light, there dimly rose
A shrouded figure in the cavern's gloom ;
Its shadowy mantle, like the moon-mist flows—
The chill dispensing drap'ry of the tomb :—
With dreamy voice, as one with thought astray,
Or hollow winds that murmur far away.

"Why dost thou vainly thus disquiet me,
And bring me to this upper world again ?
When God forsakes, can dead men succour thee,
Or teach thee how a kingdom to retain ?
Yes! death alone can save thee from disgrace ;
Thy only refuge is among the dead :
Already is prepared thy destin'd place ;
Thy fatal battle field already spread :
To-morrow's moon shall kiss the bloody plain—
Thou, nor thy sons, shall see her set again."

On Gilboa's mount the morning sun rose clear ;
Round Gilboa's fount the tribes of Israel lay ;*
But on the heart of their once kingly seer,
Weigh'd the dark secret of that tragic day.

On Gilboa's mount the ev'ning moon rose pale ;
And Gilboa's fount, with Israel's blood, ran red ;†
For Israel's King, arose the bitter wail,
On Gilboa stretched, self-number'd with the dead.

* "The Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel."—1 Sam. xix. 1.

† "And the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa."—1 Sam. xxxi. 1.

Upon that mountain's high and fatal plain,
How are the mighty fallen, pierced and slain!
Let never more refreshing dew or rain,*
From Gilboa's sod wash out the bloody stain!

* * * * *

Oh, mighty Lord, in thy great day of wrath,
Sparing not kings when they have disobeyed,†
How shall a sinner dare to cross thy path,
When from thy pure commandments he has stray'd!
Let him not venture contrite grief to feign,
Nor mock repentance o'er his guilt to spread;
Lest thou, to whom our very thoughts are plain,
Shalt pour down ten-fold vengeance on his head;
All thy fierce storms of wrath upon him sweep,
And whelm him ever in destruction's deep.



* "The beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places, how are the mighty fallen! Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you."—2 Sam. i. 19.

† "The Lord shall strike through kings, in the day of his wrath."—Psalm cx. 5.

For the Third Week in Lent.

DAVID.

THE REPENTANCE OF HOPE.

“And David fasted, and went in and lay all night upon the earth. For he said, who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live.”—2 Sam. xii. 16, 22.

A lily swept by the current,
A rose-bud snapp'd by the gale,
A lovely and spotless infant
Enwrap't by the angel pale.

We sigh o'er the broken lily,
We sigh o'er the rose-bud sweet,
We weep hot tears o'er the infant
Who yet never more shall weep.

'Twas thus the Hebrew maidens sang
Around their monarch's son ;
They fear'd to tell the mighty king
The little life was done.

For seven days his regal robes
Had all been laid aside ;
And fasting, weeping, to his God
He earnestly had cried.

"Great God and Father, I have sinned,
And well deserve thy wrath ;
But this sweet lamb, what hath it done
To merit early death ?*

"Let all thy billows over me
Their whelming waters roll ;
But shall I give my sinless child
To save my sinful soul ? †

"I own my guilt, most gracious Lord,
My sins before me rise ;
A broken and a contrite heart,
Oh, God, do not despise !"

A chilling silence fell upon his heart ;
His anxious servants, whisp'ring, stood apart.
"The child is dead ?" with quiv'ring lips, he said ;
Reluctantly they answer—"He is dead."

* "Lo, I have sinned and done wickedly ; but these sheep, what have they done."—2 Sam. xxiv. 17.

† "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ?"—Micah vi. 7.

Then rose the king, suppress'd each sign of grief,
No murmuring word to give his heart relief;
With grand submission, royalty resum'd,
His head anointed, and his robes perfumed,
To God's own house he calmly took his way,
His praise to offer, and his vows to pay :
"No vain repinings now (the monarch said),
Will tears bring back a lov'd one from the dead ?
Here the sweet face I never more shall see :
I go to him, he may not come to me."

* * * *

When, with prescient hearts, we feel
The shadowy angel near,
From our enfolding arms to draw,
All that makes life most dear.

We strive, with many a vigil long,
And many a weary fast,
To turn aside the threaten'd blow,
And expiate the past.

Yet all our prayers do not avail,
Nor all our tears atone ;
The treasure of our heart is left,
And we are left alone.

Then let our deep submission prove
Our penitence sincere,
And, like the Hebrew monarch, draw
Ever to God more near.

While, to our tortur'd, wearied hearts,
This thought shall peace afford—
" 'Twas God who gave, and He resum'd ;
But blessed be the Lord."*



* "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord."—Job i. 21.

For the Fourth Week in Lent.

PETER.

THE REPENTANCE OF LOVE.

"And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out and wept bitterly."—St. Luke, xxii. 60, 61, 62.

Oh, days long past, and faces lov'd of yore !
Where lie your mem'ries in our busy hearts ?
As lights grow faint on the receding shore,
So, lost in night, your outline dim departs.

The present, with its importuning cares,
Leaves no fond moment to review the past ;
By daily intervening hopes and fears,
'Tis, imperceptibly, all overcast.

But as, by sudden flaw, the fog is rent,
Disclosing all the landscape to the gaze ;
So by a look, or word at random sent,
Appear before the mind long vanish'd days.

The past is always deck'd with pensive grace,
But woe to him who sees it through remorse !
Then melancholy adds a darker phase ;
Then mem'ry is of keenest pain the source.

Thus ardent Peter, mingling with the crowd
That, in the high priest's palace, wait the morn,
Surrounded by their threats and language loud,
Their mocking questions, and the maid's light scorn.

To present fears he yields his shiv'ring heart,
As at the fire he warms himself in vain ;
While through the night he plays the recreant's part,
All unregardful of his Master's pain.

But, hark ! the morning bird's exultant cheer
(Unconscious herald of the fatal day)
Falls, like a death-bell, on his startled ear.—
The silent Saviour turns himself away

And look'd on Peter—with that look divine—
Back rush'd the thought of many a holy day,—
The olive walk beneath the clear moonshine,
Tiberia's waters, where his light boat lay,

The prayers upon the lonely mountain side,
The faithless walk upon the midnight sea,
The tempest calmed upon the tossing tide,
The last sad ev'ning in Gethsemane.

But more than all, his Saviour's sweet reproach
When vaunting of his love, though life the price—
"Ere the shrill cock shall tell of day's approach,
This very night thou shalt deny me thrice."

Oh, what a whelming flood of love and grief
Deluged his soul in that remorseful hour!
Where shall his breaking heart now find relief
From self reproach and conscience' bitter power?

He shivers at the blazing fire's glow;
He sickens at the soldier's revelry;
Without—the night, black night—suits best his woe;
There, wand'ring long, he weeps most bitterly.

* * * * *

Oh, omnipresent God! make me perceive
For ever on my soul thy gaze divine;
So may no present things my heart deceive,
To give to them the love that should be thine:

But if, oblivious of thy presence here,
I venture my allegiance to deny,
Lord, give me grace, with deep remorse and fear,
To turn, and to repent most bitterly.



For the Fifth Week in Lent.

JUDAS.

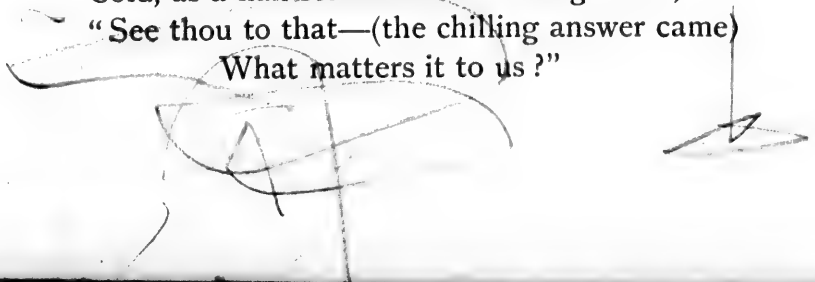
THE REPENTANCE OF DESPAIR.

"The sorrow of the world worketh death."—2 Cor. vii. 10.

The morning of the world's great tragedy!—
Already shouting crowds cried, "Crucify,"
 Around the high priest's door,
When pressing through the outpouring stream—a man,
His eyes with horror fill'd, his features wan,
 Stood breathless on the floor.

"Condemn'd and guiltless!! (gaspingly he said)
'Tis I have sinn'd, 'tis I who have betray'd
 The Righteous and the Good;
Take back your bribe, with bloody stain;
It burns my hand, it sears my brain—
 Price of my Master's blood.

Cold, as a hail-storm on the hissing flame,—
"See thou to that—(the chilling answer came)
 What matters it to us?"



"Too late!! too late!! (with frenzied voice he cries)
No justice here, no rescue from the skies;
Wretch, to betray Him thus!"

Down from his hand, the cursed coin he cast;
With frantic, flying feet, the streets he past;
For, burning through his brain,
From hundred, hundred voices rose the cry—
"Away! and crucify him, crucify"—
Again, and yet again.

Poor conscience-stricken wretch! turn even yet,
And throw thyself before thy Saviour's feet;
His cross take up and bear,
Till thou shalt come to Golgotha; nor leave
Its blood-stain'd foot, till thou a glance receive
To save thee from despair.

But, no! urged onward by the fiends of Hell,
(Like those fierce creatures who in tombs did dwell
And shunn'd the sight of man),
He passed Gehenna's drear, accursed vale,
Where midnight sees fierce Moloch's victims pale
Gleam in the moonlight wan.

He stayed not, till upon the mountain side,
So bleakly grand, so desolately wide,
He for a little stood:
There nature seem'd congenial with despair;
No distant voice upon the lurid air;
It was the field of blood.

When lo! swift blotting out the mid-day sun,
Wild chaos seem'd to have again begun
 To desolate the world.
A horror of deep darkness fell around ;
Earth shudder'd to her deepest depths profound ;
 Dead from their graves were hurl'd :

The mountains trembled, and the earth did quake ;
The thunders rolling, ten-fold echoes wake ;
 Where shall the traitor flee ?
Hark ! through the gloom, his mad, despairing call—
"Fall on me, rocks, ye tott'ring mountains, fall,
 And end my misery !"

Ye howling fiends, whose curses fill the air !
Not Hell itself can equal my despair,
 Life—life itself is Hell.
Yawn, yawn, ye horrid gulphs ! Hell open wide !
Within your burning depths my crime I hide."

With one wild spring, into the darken'd space,
Headlong, rebounding down the rocks steep face,
 A mangled corpse he fell.*

* * * *

Saviour ! by thy days of fasting,
 By thy lonely hours of prayer,
By thine agony and passion,
 Save, Oh save me from despair !

* Acts i. 13.

"A Wreath of Rue," for Lent.

By thy precious death and burial,
By thy resurrection rare,
By thy promis'd Holy Spirit,
Save, Oh save me from despair!

In the time of tribulation,
Of the hour of death aware,
In the awful day of judgment,
Save, Oh save me from despair!



For Good Friday.

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS.

THE REPENTANCE OF AFFLICTION.

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”—St. Luke, xxiii. 42.

High noon ! yet dark as blackest hour of night,
Save when the light'ning darts its blue, keen light,
While rolls the hollow thunder :
The earth rocks wildly, in the awful gloom ;
The dead leap up from their unquiet tomb,
As yawn their graves asunder.

Amid the rage of elemental strife,
Oh ! what a fearful hour to yield up life,
Out into vague space going !
Yet ev'ry vivid light'ning's fitful glare,
Reveals, amid the horror-darken'd air,
Three crosses dimly showing :

Where, nail'd in torture's ling'ring agony,
Three anguish'd human forms are rais'd on high,
Each nerve with torment starting :

Convulsed nature groans in sympathy,
As slowly pass the bitter hours by :
Life, drop by drop, departing.

Yet what, to One, was torture's keenest pang,—
Or execrations that around Him rang,—
Or earth beneath Him reeling :
Unheeded trifles all these horrors seem :
The soul,—the soul,—within that hour supreme,
Absorb'd all other feeling.

No human mind can grasp with faintest thought,
The mental anguish that in Him was wrought
In death's mysterious hour :
The whole accumulated mass of crime,
From Eden's gates until remotest time,
On his pure soul did pour.

The evil torrent compass'd Him about ;
Almost his view of Heaven was blotted out ;
Almost his faith was shaken ;
He saw Hell yawn to gulf the horrid tide ;
" My God ! (in mortal agony he cried),
" My God ! am I forsaken ! !"

The left-hand cross (the Saviour close beside,
With others woe thus wholly occupied)
Bore one with death's sweat streaming :
But yet, with foam-blanch'd lip, fast glazing eyes,
He, reckless, Heaven and Hell alike defies,
With his last breath blaspheming.

Far otherwise the third felt life ebb out :
Unheeding nature's throes, the rabble rout ;
 Death's sharpest pangs unheeding ;
Upon his Saviour fix'd his dying eyes,
Unto his Saviour breath'd his latest sighs,
 For dear forgiveness pleading.

The gloom might deepen, or the earth might sway,
Or, drop by drop, his heart's blood ooze away,—

 One, only one petition—

"When thou in Heaven again, dear Lord, shalt be,
By all these ling'ring hours of agony,
With pitying pardon then remember me,
 And save me from perdition."

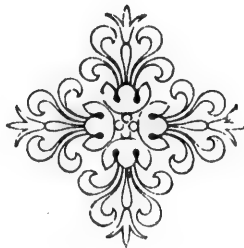
The deed is done !—the tragedy is o'er !—
The gloom is past—light ventures back once more,
 Earth stills her heart's loud beating ;
Life's agony has found a perfect rest
For one poor soul, who on his Saviour's breast
 In paradise is sleeping.

* * * * *

When all life's sky is looming dark,
And all life's storms upon us beat,
And when the very ground we trust
 Is giving way beneath our feet,
Oh, may we then, amid the gloom,
 Close by our side our Saviour see !
And with repentant hope implore,
 "In mercy, Lord, remember me."

When to some bitter cross we're tied,
With sorrow sharper than the nails,
Till, slowly ebbing, day by day,
And drop by drop, our heart's hope fails,
Oh ! may we close beside our cross,
Our sympathising Saviour see ;
And, with repentant hope implore—
"In mercy, Lord, remember me."

And when life's fitful day is o'er,
And we must meet the hour supreme ;
When vague and dark the future lies,
And all the past is but a dream ;
Oh ! might but then through death's dark vale,
Our Saviour our companion be !
We, not in vain, should him implore—
"Thy kingdom comes, remember me."



For Easter Eve.

THE TRUE REPENTANCE.

"Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand."—Matt. iv. 17.

"The Sun of Righteousness shall arise."—Malachi, iv. 2.

Tossing on the midnight ocean
Flies the fragile bark ;
All around it, gulfs in motion ;
All above it, dark ;
And the winds careering.
What shall guide that vessel lonely
Through the stormy night ?
Can she trust the wild winds only
To impel her right,
For the haven steering ?

No ! the winds, at random ranging,
Make the vessel frail
Change her course to suit their changing,
Tremble at their gale,
And capricious veering.

"A Wreath of Rue," for Lent.

But the clouds above are riven ;
 Gleaming through the night,
From the tranquil vault of Heaven,
 Stars are shining bright,
Stedfast, calm, and cheering.

They shall guide the vessel onward
 Through the tossing waves ;
They shall point her pathway homeward,
 Though the tempest raves,
Foaming billows rearing.
Yet fierce rocks the night may cover—
 Breakers on the bars—
How can she her course discover
 By the light of stars,
Through such dangers steering ?

But the long, dark night is ending,
 Dawn hath ting'd the foam ;
Now the rising sun is sending
 Crimson through the gloom,
Glorious appearing :
Every hidden rock revealing,
 Glow the morning sun :
No more doubt or danger feeling,
 Flies the vessel on,
To her haven nearing.

* * * *

Let this dark voyage a symbol be !
Eternal death, the raging sea—
'Mid dangers here we darkly strive,
Ere we in Heaven can safe arrive.

By terror's tempest, when we're driven,
Fear urges on our course to Heaven :
Yet often some reacting gale
Turns all aside the home-bound sail :

Or if, as stars to guide our course,
Regret, and hope, e'en love, have force ;
Still, when temptations rocks are near,
They cannot always steer us clear.

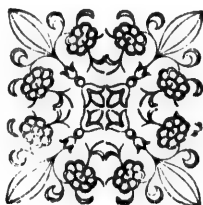
But Christ a higher aim has given—
To purify ourselves for Heaven—
That object, like the sun's bright ray,
Directs with clearness all our way.

May I my daily life amend,
By every means that God may send ;
Fear, or regret, or hope, or love,
Each draw me more and more above.

But, more than each and all express,—
The love of perfect righteousness—
Let fear, and hope, and sorrow be,
All merged in that pure ecstasy.

One thought—my Heaven, my God is near :
One aim—to keep my spirit clear ;
That, of his glorious perfection,
It may receive some faint reflection.

My soul's athirst for thee, my God !*
When shall I enter thy abode ?
"In holiness, I wait" the word ;†
"Even so, come quickly, Jesus Lord."‡



* "My soul thirsteth for God—for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"—Psalm xlii. 2.

† "Thus have I looked for thee in holiness."—Psalm lxiii. 3.

‡ "Even so come, Lord Jesus."—Rom. xxii. 20.

THE SACRED LAKE.

Part First.

At length, in cloudless skies, the burning day
Of eastern clime has flamed itself away ;
The shadows darken on Gennes'et's Lake,
And ev'ning breezes dreamy murmurs wake ;
The fainting foliage rallies fresh and strong,
And yields its perfume, as the birds their song.

Here, with the consecrated thorn o'er head,*
And oleander rose-leaves round me spread,
Will I repose until the sacred spell
From lake and shore, from rock, and hill, and dell,
O'er my rapt soul, and ev'ry sense shall fall,
And from the past a dreamy semblance call.

Wake, mighty lyre, with the silver frame,†
Touch'd by the dying sun with hand of flame,
Or, trembling with the black squall's sudden sweep,
Until "the deep is calling unto deep";

* Tradition says, the Nalik, or Thorn tree, is that from which the Saviour's crown of thorns was made.

† Gennesaret, in the Old Testament, is called Chinneroth, which means a lyre. Along the edge of the lake, a level beach runs the whole way round, partly of shells and sand, like a white line.

Sound thy grand music thro' this twilight hour,
When Nature's influence has deepest power,
Till, like that divination-seeking seer,*
Gazing thro' ages, from the top of Peor,
I "fall into a trance with open eyes,"
And visions from the past before me rise.

He saw the dawning of a wondrous star,
Whose faint crepuscule ting'd the east afar ;
That star arose, diffusing floods of light,
Increased in splendour to its zenith's height,
Pursued its glorious course to western skies,
Watch'd, in its progress, by all nation's eyes :
Long trails of glory still the east illumine,
But mix'd with shadows of returning gloom.

With worldly heart, and with reluctant gaze,
The prophet saw that gleam of future days ;
Oh, then ! to rev'rent soul, and longing eyes,
The past, if summon'd, may perchance arise.

It may be, ere the parting sun was set,
On such an eve as this, Gennesaret,
Thy bosom trembling with his farewell kiss,
And ev'ry wavelet dancing in its bliss :
A boat lay dipping with the ripple slight,
With masts far shadowed by the crimson light,
Its white sails lifting with the western breeze,
Mov'd gently onward o'er the ev'ning seas.

* Balaam.

Well might that ship the waters proudly ride !
It bore the Lord of Nature in its side.
Well might that ship with gentlest motion move !
Within it lay the Prince of Peace and Love.

Now, wearied with the day-long spirit strife,
He deeply slept—mysterious phase of life !
Elastic links that elsetime bind the soul,
Release awhile and free it from control ;
Afar it speeds to many a vanish'd hour,
For time and space for it have lost their power.

He slept—conjecture scarcely dares, in vain,
To trace his spirit past the starry train,
Until within that boundless central space,
Where highest Heaven of heavens has endless place,
The Empyrean of the angelic host,
In glory unapproachable 'tis lost.

He slept—embolden'd by the peaceful sight,
The fiends malign, from sea, and air, and night,
Have summon'd rapidly the tempest dire,
The thunder's rolling, and the lightning's fire ;
The sea—late sleeping in the rosy light—
Now white with rage, now black with sudden night,
Rears high its waves against the straining sail,
Rends wide its gulfs beneath the vessel frail.

Had then those evil spirits but the power,
As will malign, within that awful hour,

Down, down beneath that dark sea's deepest wave,
That sleeping form had found a mortal's grave,
Before His full and perfect sacrifice
Had open'd wide the gate of Paradise.

But tho' no storm that holy sleep had stirr'd,
Prayer woke the Saviour with its slightest word ;
He heard the cry, "We perish : Master, save !"
Amid the roaring of the wind and wave.
With power's grand serenity He rose,
The lambent light'ning round his forehead glows,
The wind paused breathless in its frantic course,
And waves abash'd, restrained their raging force,
While softly clear, was heard from hill to hill,
The all-pervading mandate, "Peace, be still."

Then parting with a glory overhead,
In pil'd confusion, swift the black clouds fled ;
The ev'ning flush again suffus'd the skies,
And on the tranquil wave reflected lies :
The sea no motion, and the air no sound,
For suddenly "a great calm" fell around.

The sea was calm, but not the human heart :
No calm for it till throbbing life depart.
Emotions chase emotions, wave on wave,
Now sorrows deluge, and now passions rave,
Each change brings apprehension and unrest,
New dangers threaten, by new fears opprest.

To these poor fishers, rescued from the storm,
The very calm gave fear another form ;
"Who is this Ruler of the seas," they cry,
"Whom storms obey ? we fear exceedingly."
Borne onward by the tempest's sudden sweep.
The vessel lay beneath the eastern steep ;
Whose haunted caves, with ev'ning shadows dark,
Frown'd grimly down upon the trembling bark.

On those drear hills and desolated land,
The evil fiend held sway, and all his band ;
And gaping caverns yawn'd with bones bespread,
The gloomy garners of the heathen dead.
Already, gath'ring with the gath'ring night,
Were howling demons heard, and wailing sprite,
Malignant waiting, till the midnight hour
Should over evil men confirm their power.
And when the dipping boat drew near the land,
Rush'd wildly downward to the wave-wash'd strand
A creature, horrid to the shudd'ring sight,
Tho' once in human form, with reason bright ;
Now, madness gleaming from his fiery eyes,
With clotted locks that self abhorrent rise,
His lips convuls'd, with blood and foam besprent,
His body naked, gash'd with wounds, and rent ;
All reeking with the odor of the tombs,
With frantic fury down the rock he comes ;
At sight of men, his eyes with rage dilate,
And fierce desire that burning rage to sate.

But when the Saviour calm, before him stood,
The unconscious demon quail'd before his God ;
With disappointed rage and fiendish yell,
Down grov'ling at the sacred feet he fell ;
"I know Thee, Jesu, Son of God most high,
(Rang his reluctant and discordant cry),
And I adjure Thee, by that name sublime,
That thou torment me not before my time."

(Oh, illustration high, of contrast dire,
Between the man whom hellish passions fire,
And him who yields his pure and gentle soul,
To God's own spirit, and divine control !)

The pitying Saviour, with compassion sweet,
Beheld the abject being at his feet ;
An emanating halo round Him shed
Its lustrous beams, and o'er His features spread ;
The latent deity within Him woke,
And with divine authority He spoke.
"Avaunt, thou evil one, nor dare again
Within his spirit to resume thy reign."

The man arose with many shudders strong,
Like one who spell-bound thro' the midnight long
Has tost in horrid dreams, but with the light
Of day returning, wakens cold from fright ;
With ghastly terrors still his senses reel,
And scarcely safe he yet from harm can feel.
But when he look'd upon that holy face,

Where pity soften'd its celestial grace,
The thoughts grew clear in his tormented brain,
And all was calm, and sweetest peace again.
His Saviour near, and he in perfect mind,
He reck'd not now, tho' fast adown the wind
Came shrieks of baffl'd fiends and hellish din,
Still wilder, faster, as the night clos'd in ;
Above, below, around, on ev'ry side,
Now close at hand, now wailing far and wide,
Half felt, half seen, fierce phantoms swarm around,
Moan from the wave, and mutter from the ground ;
From ev'ry hill-side tomb, and lonely grave,
From dreary upland slope, and haunted cave,
Rose horrid monsters as the day died out,
The steepest cliffs they throng'd with hideous rout,
With savage yell of hatred and despair,
That fill'd the rocks, the hills, the earth, the air,
Then rush'd tumultuous headlong down the steep,
With one fell swoop, and vanish'd in the deep.

As died the uproar wild upon the hill,
And ev'ry echoing rock at length grew still,
Night cast her thickest mantle all around,
And on the waters silence fell profound.

* * * *



Part Second.

Yes, sweet Gennes'et ! though thy waters blue
Reflect unconsciously the heaven's view,
As would a blue-eyed child, yet free from guile,
Return its mother's gaze with smile for smile,
Yet have thy waves and shores spectators been
Of many a wild, or sad, or solemn scene.

Oh, Nature ! how impressionless thou art !
Hast thou no sympathy ? no soul ? no heart ?

Yet why reproach thee for thy unconcern ?
Could'st thou grow sad, and old, where should we turn
To cheer the weary heart and rest the brain,
If thou reflected'st ev'ry human pain ?
Nay ! keep thy youth, and thy unruffled way,
The happy making still more glad and gay,
And e'en the saddest, for a little while,
At times beguiling to a passing smile.

So, too, may thy unalter'd lovely face,
Aid us the past to realize and trace ;
For, more than eighteen centuries ago,
Those ev'ning stars were shining bright as now ;
Thus cold and steadfast in the high expanse,
Thus trembling in the waters did they dance.

These same dark hills that then their shadows threw,
When gently came the crescent moon in view,
And thus, perchance, she rose, one far gone night,
And gleam'd upon the mist, which dimly white,
Its silent columns from the sea and land
Had marshall'd noiselessly along the strand.
Night's chill, vague awe, the quiet moonlight's ray,
And silence deep, upon the mountains lay,
Save from a lonely slope the jackal's cry,
Or olive trembling as the breeze pass'd by.

Below, the sea made dreary, sullen moan,
As one still sobbing for a grief just gone ;
The long drawn breath, the heavy rolling swell,
Monotonously surg'd, and rose and fell.
When eve disclosed the moon, a little boat
From Gadara's lone beach had push'd afloat,
And all night long had toil'd, but toil'd in vain,
Bethsaida's sleeping city to regain.
By ev'ry rolling swell still driven back,
Where Gergesa flung down its shadows black ;
But still they row'd, constrain'd by unseen power,*
From eve's last twilight, till the midnight hour.
And when the fourth watch of the night drew near,
The dreary, moaning waves, grew still more drear,
Upon the midnight air, till now so still,
From out th' opposing cliffs a wind rose shrill,
It sough'd along the wave with bitter sweep,
And darkness lay upon the troubl'd deep.

* "And Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and go before Him to the other side."—Matt. xiv. 22.

Then, whence from eastward comes that hazy gleam?
Too soon it is to be the dawn's first beam.
No ling'ring moonbeam on the vapour white,
The Galilean hills eclips'd her light.
Tho' faint, yet clear—with form yet undefin'd—
Not to the eye so plain, as to the mind;
Along the wave, and in the air diffus'd,
A shadow thin, with softest light suffus'd,
So gleam'd and waver'd with a mystic light,
That strange effulgence thro' the far-spent night.

The frighten'd boatmen as they backward glance,
Still see it nearer, and more near advance;
More plainly yet, assume a form defin'd,
The human with supernal mien combin'd.
And ere it reach'd their random-drifting boat,
A clear, bright vision on the sea did float.
Angelic face—eyes that were upward rais'd,
As Heaven were open to their raptur'd gaze:
Around the head a gleaming circle glows,
The raiment like concentred moonbeam flows;
The waves subsiding, on each side retreat,
And leave a crystal pavement for the feet.
So, rapt and noiseless, drew the vision near,
As if unconscious of their presence there,
And seem'd as tho' it would have pass'd them by,*
Fear,—mute till then,—woke silence with a cry

* "He cometh unto them walking upon the water, and would have passed by them."—St. Mark, vi. 43.

That thrill'd along the waves, and reach'd the hills,
But ere it died away, a sweet voice fills
The air like music low, "'Tis I, (it said,
With gentle soothing tone,) be not afraid."

That voice divine has calm and peace restored,
They recognize their Saviour, and their Lord,
As on the darksome waters long ago ;
"Let there be light," had made light's fountain flow.
So, as the Saviour spoke, the dawn's first white
Touch'd hill, and rock, and cloud, and wave, with light ;
No longer need they ply the weary oar,
For instantly they reach'd the wish'd for shore.*

Oh, restless wav'ring lake ! could such a scene
Leave no impression on thy waters' sheen ?
No ling'ring fragments of the picture stay,
As sacred relics for this distant day ?
Alas ! thy waters, like Time's mighty stream,
Sweep all the past away, like fleeting dream.
And as those rowers on the midnight lake,
So on Time's stream, are all compell'd to take
Their way, and toil in vain throughout its night ;
Far back upon the stream are rays of light,
But darkly seen, they various forms assume :
God grant, that there a morning light may come
When all our toil and anxious thoughts shall cease,
And we, too, recognize the Saviour's face !
And (tho' in dazzling glory all array'd)
The sweet words hear, "'Tis I, be not afraid."

* "And immediately the ship was at the land, whither they went,"—
St. Mark, vi. 48.

Part Third.

Since that far day, when earthly Paradise
Was clos'd for ever to our sadden'd eyes,
And flames high waving at its eastern gate,
Left all its lovely precincts desolate.
No place on Earth more sacred can be found,
Than that the Galilean hills surround ;
And in its very heart like jewel set,
Thy gleaming waters, sweet Gennesaret.

'Twas here the Saviour's fav'rite haunt, and here,
Upon the fragrant hills, and waters clear.
When fiery passions sway'd the fickle crowd,
He sought in peace communion with His God.
Above Jerusalem's proud walls He wept,
But on Gennesaret He calmly slept ;
And when His human tragedy was o'er,
And Earth should see His gracious form no more,
Soon to resume His Majesty on high,
With tranquil grandeur to ascend the sky,
He would not leave the world till He should stand,
Once more, bright water, on thy sparkling strand ;
And saw, once more, the eastern dawn awake,
Across the billows of thy favor'd lake,

When some high enterprise has been o'erthrown,
And all our day-dreams to the winds are blown ;
When some one dear, yet by unkindness driven,
Has gone for aye, and left us unforgiven ;
How objectless the weary hours go by !
The daily task perform'd, how listlessly !

'Twas thus despondent, broken-hearted men,
Came back the fishers, to their lake again ;
With soaring thoughts, and with vague hopes elate,
They climbed the Galilean hills of late,
And to Jerusalem with joy had gone,
In Spring's most holy festival to join.
Their undefin'd, but brilliant hopes had fled,
Their cause abandon'd, and their Master dead.

They trusted He should Israel redeem,
But He was gone, and all had been a dream !
They lov'd Him with a simple heart and pure,
But He was gone ! for ever, ever more !
In evil hour they left their Lord and fled,
But He was gone ! no pardon could be said !

With such sad thoughts they listless threw their net,
Their hair with dew, their cheeks with tears were wet,
They threw their nets, but yet they scarcely cared
If well or ill, their nightly fishing fared ;
They threw their nets, and then they lay and thought
Of all He on the mountain-side had taught.

How in the raging storm their fears He calm'd,
 How the poor mad demoniac He charm'd,
 How in the fourth watch of a stormy night,
 He walk'd the waters, silent as a sprite.

But He was gone ! and they should never more
 Lift, at His bidding, sail, or ply the oar.
 Yes, He was gone ! their Master and their Lord,
 The kind, the great, the gentle, the ador'd ;
 How desolate their lives without Him here !
 When would the promis'd Comforter appear !

Now had the fourth watch of the summer's night
 Touch'd ev'ry hill and rock with morning light,
 Its level rays along the lake had sped,
 Gleam'd in each cave, and ting'd each rock with red ;
 Pierc'd ev'ry fissure deep, with shadows hung,
 On each wild rose a dew-lit brilliance flung.
 The glitt'ring beach, with sand and sea-shells white,
 Reflected back each sparkling ray of light ;
 And there, awaiting, stood a form divine,
 The morning rays around His head combine
 To form a glory dazzling to behold,
 A wreath of light His gracious brow to fold ;
 His figure, so ethereal to the view,
 It seemed the distant landscape could show through ;
 Too palpable to be a spirit quite,
 Yet, for a human form too purely bright.
 A body glorified to dwell on high—
 A mortal, cloth'd with immortality.

And through the freshness of the summer dawn,
Like music from its very stillness drawn,
A sweet voice call'd them—"Children"—at the word
The lov'd disciple cried, "It is the Lord."
Oh, joy! oh, tenfold joy, from sorrow born!
No longer listless now they droop forlorn;
Th' impulsive Peter cannot even wait
For boat to bring him to his Saviour's feet,
But plunges in the wave with ardent haste,
To be the first that perfect bliss to taste.

Oh, perfect bliss! again to look upon
One whom we thought for ever, ever gone!
Oh, perfect bliss! to have the deed forgiv'n,
For which remorse our very soul has riven!
Oh, utmost bliss! that perfect love can prove,
Allow'd to say—"Thou *knowest* that I love."

My Saviour, oh, my Saviour, would that I
With truth, could utter that same heart-felt cry!
My faithlessness eradicated be,
By one sure look, e'en of reproach from Thee,
That I Thy presence here might realize,
Thus see Thy very Self before me rise!

Audacious thought! presumptuous and vain,
Not for the cold of heart and dull of brain,
Such high, ecstatic vision may appear,
Or Earth-tied souls approach to Heaven so near.

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Content thee, feeble one, enough for thee,
If where His steps have been, thy steps may be ;
If 'mid His sacred haunts thy way thou take ;
If thou may'st gaze upon His fav'rite lake.

Oh, mystic lake! connecting earth and sky,
Teach me, like thee, to raise my thoughts on high ;
Wake with thy mighty lyre thy sacred song,
Sing in the fading light, sing all night long !
Sing till the dawn comes gray across the hill !
Sing till the noon-tide blaze lies hot and still !
Sing till eve's shades and perfumes come once more,
To bathe the fiery rocks and glitt'ring shore !
Sing till the western breeze thy notes prolong,
And all his sacred story weave in song !
Till Time's effacing waves shall backward roll,
And all the past imbue my very soul.

Or till, enraptur'd by thy wind-touch'd lyre,
Scenes fairer yet than these, my thoughts inspire.
More favor'd waves, Gennesaret, than thine,
Forever in His gracious presence shine.
A crystal river, with life's essence fill'd,*
Whose source is from the throne of God distill'd,
(Mysterious elixir, sought in vain
By man his brief existence to retain),
Throughout illimitable space and light;
Diffuses its ethereal waters bright ;

* "A pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God."—Rev. xxii. 1.

Oh ! who can tell, what joys to those who drink
One draught of life from its enchanting brink !
A time shall come, Gennes' ret, when thy wave,
No longer rock, or shore, or hill shall lave ;
And ev'ry sea be merg'd in liquid fire ;*
Aye, Time itself, by rosy time expire.†
But far away that river still shall flow,
And endless life and happiness bestow.

Oh, that my soul a longing thirst could have‡
For one deep draught of that celestial wave !
So might I freely of its waters take
From Earth's cold sleep in perfect life to wake !



* "And there was no more sea."—Rev. xxi. 1.

† "And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the Earth, lifted up his hand to Heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever, that there should be time no longer."—Rev. x. 5, 6.

‡ "And let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."—Rev. xii. 17.

